

Message Text

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47

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 ACDA-19 IO-14 FEA-02 EB-11 DRC-01 /145 W

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R 011838Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0801

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY BERN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y T E X T

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, GW

SUBJECT: FRG HIGHWAY SPEED LIMITS - NO LONGER AN
ENERGY PROBLEM

1. THE FRG CABINET ON FEBRUARY 27 DECIDED TO ALLOW AN
ECON MINISTRY ORDINANCE, WHICH IMPOSED SPEED LIMITS OF
100 KM/H ON SUPER HIGHWAYS AND 80 KM/H ON SECONDARY
ROADS, TO EXPIRE ON MARCH 15. FUEL CONSERVATION HAS
THUS BEEN REMOVED AS A BASIS FOR THE UNPRECEDENTED
TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS EXPERIENCED BY GERMAN DRIVERS OVER
THE PAST FOUR MONTHS. BECAUSE OF STRIKING REDUCTIONS
IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS AND FATALITIES (36 AND 39 PERCENT
RESPECTIVELY ON AUTOBAHNS) REGISTERED IN DECEMBER AND
EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE RESULTS IN JANUARY, TRANSPORT
MINISTER LAURITZEN ATTEMPTED TO CONVINCE HIS COLLEAGUES
THAT A TRAFFIC ORDINANCE SHOULD BE INTRODUCED PRO-
VIDING FOR A SPEED LIMIT OF NO MORE THAN 120 KM/H ON

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AUTOBAHNS. IN A COMPROMISE DECISION THE CABINET AGREED
TO A TRANSPORT MINISTRY (FMT) REGULATION PROVIDING FOR

AN AUTOBAHN SPEED LIMIT OF 130 KM/H (APPROXIMATELY 80 MPH) FOR A TRIAL PERIOD OF THREE YEARS TO TAKE EFFECT ON MARCH 15. THE NEW REGULATION WILL REQUIRE BUNDESRAT APPROVAL WHEREAS THE EXISTING FMT ORDINANCE SETTING A 100 KM/H LIMIT ON SECONDARY ROADS WILL AUTOMATICALLY COME BACK INTO EFFECT ON MARCH 15.

2. DESPITE APPARENT WIDESPREAD PUBLIC AND SPD SUPPORT FOR AN AUTOBAHN SPEED LIMIT OF AROUND 120 KM/H, OPPOSITION--CDU/CSU--AND SOME FDP QUARTERS HAVE TAKEN A STRONG STAND AGAINST THE REIMPOSITION OF AN AUTOBAHN SPEED LIMIT FAVORING INSTEAD THE INTRODUCTION OF A SYSTEM OF POSTING RECOMMENDED SPEED LIMITS ALONG THE AUTOBAHNS WITHOUT ANY LEGAL DRIVER OBLIGATION TO OBSERVE THESE SPEEDS. THIS POSITION IS FAVORED BY THE AUTO CLUBS AND INDUSTRY CIRCLES WHO HAVE MOUNTED AN ACTIVE LOBBYING AND PR CAMPAIGN AGAINST A SPEED LIMIT. GIVEN THE CDU/CSU MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESRAT THE OUTCOME OF THE PRESENT CONTROVERSY IS AT BEST UNCERTAIN.

3. ECON MINISTRY ENERGY EXPERT LANTZKE TOLD EMBOFF YESTERDAY THAT WHILE THE FRG'S SPECIAL ENERGY LEGISLATION WOULD PERMIT THE REIMPOSITION OF THE PRESENT LOW SPEED LIMITS AT ANY TIME DURING THE YEAR, IT NOW APPEARED THIS WOULD NOT PROVE NECESSARY, EVEN DURING THE SUMMER VACATION PERIOD WHEN GASOLINE CONSUMPTION SHOULD REACH PEAK LEVELS. HE DOUBTED THAT THE BUNDESRAT WOULD CONCUR IN THE 130 KM/H LIMIT BUT THOUGHT THAT THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY MIGHT PROVIDE SOME DISINCENTIVE TO SPEEDING BY INSTITUTING A STRICTER CLAIMS POLICY TENDING TO DISADVANTAGE DRIVERS INVOLVED IN ACCIDENTS AT HIGH SPEEDS. HILLENBRAND

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